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FM AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO
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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR (JONES), EUR/SCE (HYLAND, FOOKS,
MCGUIRE), S/WCI (WILLIAMSON/RICCI/VIBUL-JOLLES)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2019

TAGS: PREL PTER BA
SUBJECT: BOSNIA - AMBASSADOR DELIVERS DIPNOTE ON GUANTANAMO
DETAINEE LAHMAR

REF: STATE 35244

Classified By: Ambassador Charles English for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/NF) The Ambassador met on April 29 with Prime Minister Nikola Spiric to deliver a diplomatic note requesting that Bosnia accept the return of Guantanamo detainee Sabir Lahmar (reftel). The Ambassador stressed that the U.S. had pursued other alternatives with Guantanamo detainees formerly resident in Bosnia, and that one of these detainees might be accepted by another European country. However, Lahmar had family in Bosnia, did not want to return to Algeria, and had no clear ties to any other country. Consequently, Bosnia seemed to be the only reasonable alternative at this time.

¶2. (S/NF) The Ambassador noted that he had spoken with Justice Minister Colak, Security Minister Sadovic and Bosnian Intelligence Agency (OSA) Director Dzuvo about this issue. He added that he would deliver the dipnote to Foreign Minister Alkalaj when he returned to Bosnia next week, and stressed that he would be happy to talk to additional ministers about the issue if Spiric thought this worthwhile. The Ambassador said that if Bosnia accepted Lahmar from Guantanamo, and then had to deport him in accordance with its own laws, this would be a "second-best," but nevertheless acceptable, alternative for the U.S. He added that, if the Bosnian government could decide to accept Lahmar by mid-May, this would be a welcome development prior to the likely upcoming visit of the Vice President to Bosnia.

¶3. (S/NF) Spiric said that had already spoken with OSA director Dzuvo about this issue, and that there was a "general readiness" on both Dzuvo's and Spiric's part to resolve the problem. Spiric said that, before making his own final decision on the matter, he wanted to assure himself, in so far as possible, that Lahmar would not become involved in terrorism if he returned to Bosnia. Spiric said he had heard that the U.S. had given additional information to the French Government about the threat posed by Guantanamo detainee Boumediene, and asked if the U.S. had additional information it could share with Bosnia about Lahmar. He said he would let the Ambassador know if there were any ministers the Ambassador could usefully lobby, and stressed that he would try to get a Council of Ministers decision as soon as possible on this issue. However, Spiric said he was unsure whether the Government could make a decision by mid-May. The Ambassador said he would check whether the USG had any additional information it could share.

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